

## Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3763

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7706

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, PFOR, OREP

SUBJECT: CODEL RIBICOFF-BAKER, MEETING WITH DEF MIN PERES

1. DEFENSE MINISTER PERES HOSTED A DINNER PARTY IN JERUSALEM THE EVENING OF 10 NOVEMBER OFR CODEL RIBICOFF-BAKER. PRIOR TO THE DINNER 30 MINUTES WERE SET ASIDE FOR A BRIEFING/ QUESTION-ANSWER PERIOD. AFTER A BRIEF BUT WARM WELCOME MINISTER PERES INDICATED HE WOULD PREFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS. RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS, PERES INDICATED THAT PEACE WOULD BE ACHIEVED IN THE MID EAST IN TEN YEARS TIME. THAT PEACE WOULD BE ACHIEVED FROM COMBINATION OF ISRAELI STRENGTH AND INTERIM SETTLEMENTS.

2. PERES STATED THAT ISRAEL'S WARTIME STRENGTH WAS 600,000 PERSONNEL, CONSTITUTED PRIMARILY OF RESERVE FORCES. TO MAINTAIN A POSITION OF STRENGTH WOULD REQUIRE A DEFENSE BUDGET OF FOUR BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR WITH A CONTRIBUTION OF 1.5 BILLION A YEAR FROM THE UNITED STATES OF WHICH APPROXIMATELY ONE-HALF BILLION WOULD BE SPENT FOR SYSTEM SUPPORT AND 700 MILLION FOR NEW EQUIPMENT. THIS LEVEL OF SUPPORT WILL BE REQUIRED OVER THE YEARS UNLESS "ISRAEL CAN DISCOVER OIL, THERE WILL BE AN ARMS LIMITATION AGREEMENT IN THE MID-EAST OR PEACE WILL COME."

3. PERES EXPRESSED REAL CONCERN OVER THE FLOW OF WESTERN AND PARTICULARLY U.S. WEAPONS TO THE ARABS BECAUSE U.S. WEAPONS ARE THE BEST IN THE WORLD AND THE ARAB COUNTRIES ARE STILL IN A STATE OF WAR WITH ISRAEL. HE  
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HAD NO CONCERN OVER U.S. WEAPONS BEING PROVIDED TO

IRAN. HIGHLIGHTING THE TRAGEDY IN LEBANON IN TERMS OF THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES WHICH EXCEEDS ALL OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI WARS COMBINED, HE STATED THAT ISRAEL IS HELPING THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WITHOUT SENDING TROOPS ACROSS THE BORDER. WHEN ASKED IF ISRAEL WAS PROVIDING AID TO SOUTH AFRICA AND THEIR COUNTER-TERRORIST OPERATIONS, PERES SAID, "NO, WE'VE NOT BEEN ASKED, AND WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF PROVIDING THAT KIND OF AID".

4. ADDRESSING THE POSSIBILITY OF A FUTURE NUCLEAR ARMS CONFRONTATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, PERES STATED NUCLEAR WEAPONS PRODUCTION IS NOT A TECHNOLOGICAL PROBLEM FOR ISRAEL BUT THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE NOT AN ANSWER TO THE PROBLEMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. PERES FELT IT WAS UP TO THE MAJOR POWERS TO FIND A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION. HE WAS IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PROPOSAL PENDING IN THE U.S. CONGRESS TO PROVIDE NUCLEAR REACTORS FOR EGYPT, IRAN, AND ISRAEL.

5. FINALLY IN COMMENTS ON HIS POLITICAL PLANS PERES NOTED THAT CONGRESSMEN LIKE TO BECOME SENATORS, AND EVEN SOME SENATORS ASPIRED TO HIGHER POSITIONS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED DEFEAT IN THE LABOR PARTY CONVENTION TWO YEARS AGO BUT NOTED THAT ANOTHER CONVENTION WAS SOON TO OCCUR AND HE WAS TRYING TO KEEP HIS CREDENTIALS FRESH WITHIN THE PARTY FRAMEWORK.  
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